

1. Q: Will the successful bidder for this planning contract be precluded in any way from bidding on future work to build or maintain the Exchange?

A: No, vendors participating in the planning stage of Vermont's Exchange may also bid on any future RFPs for implementation and/or operation of the Exchange.

2. Q: The Cover Page (p1) indicates the proposal is due at 3 PM and section 2.2 Procurement Timetable (p3) indicates it is due at 3:30 PM and there is a public opening at that same time. Please clarify the time that the proposal is due and the public opening.

A: The proposals are due by 3:30 PM, at which time they will be publicly opened at the DVHA offices in Williston, VT.

3. Q: With regard to the three (3) business references requested in section 2.4.5, can these be the same ones used in item 2.4.4?

A: The references you provide in 2.4.5 may be the contact persons for projects described in #3 in 2.4.4; however, 2.4.4 asks for information that goes beyond references.

4. Q: In section 2.4.6, if a vendor does not bid on all sections of this RFP, does the State require the vendor to explain how the un-bid sections will be addressed?

A: No. However, where specifically requested, vendors should provide information about how coordination with other vendors will occur, if necessary.

5. Q: Section 2.4.6 Scope of Work states, "Bidders for Section 3.1.1 must bid on all subsections of 3.1.1". Please clarify if someone who bids on 3.1.1 - 3.1.6 also has to bid on Section 3.1.7 (Formal Assessment of "Churning")?

A: Bidders who wish to bid on 3.1.1 must bid on all sub-sections included in 3.1.1 (3.1.1.1-3.1.1.5). Bidders may also choose to bid on any one or more of the remaining sections (3.1.2-3.1.7), but are not required to do so.

6. Q: In 3.1.2 does the state have a working definition of "underinsured"? Or will the state work with the contractor to define this population?

A: There is no established definition of "underinsured." The contractor and the state will work to define this term within the scope of the work.

7. Q: Is the state contemplating a survey to collect information on employers?

A: Not at this time.

8. Q: Will the state provide access to the Vermont Household Health Insurance Survey micro data for this task?

A: Yes.

9. Q: For the insurance market survey, what types of carrier-specific information will the vendor have access to?

A: The Vermont Department of Banking, Insurance, Securities and Health Care Administration website provides access to numerous publicly available databases, as well as describes data that is available through a process. Vermont has all of its approved insurance products and premium rates available. Further, a contractor may work with the state to collect additional specific information from carriers.

10. Q: Regarding the household survey, can you clarify what is meant by the “range of breadth” of the study and the “unanswered questions”? Is it anticipated that the selected vendor will field a survey? Does the current survey instrument need major updating, or will most of it stay the same for the sake of continuity?

A: It is unclear at this time whether the contractor will further analyze existing data from the 2008 and 2009 Household Health Insurance Survey, or whether another, smaller survey will be needed to ask additional questions. Bidders should address this issue in their proposals. The cost estimate may account for both of these possible scenarios, although bidders should make a recommendation as to what approach makes the most sense, or in what context different approaches make sense.

11. Q: In 3.1.7 will the state provide access to administrative data (public program enrollment files and/or All Payer Claims Data) for this task?

A: The state will work with its contractor to access data necessary to perform contract activities.

12. Q: On Page 7; Exchange Design Options, you describe working closely with state to ensure maximum coordination with other State health care reform initiatives and your desire to leverage State strengths and resources, while maximizing opportunities to improve health care delivery and financing infrastructure. Can you provide us with a description of other existing and anticipated state health care reform initiatives as well as your assessment of existing State strengths and resources?

A: Bidders should be familiar with Vermont's health care reform initiatives. Examples of websites containing information pertaining to Vermont initiatives include:

<http://www.greenmountaincare.org/>

<http://hcr.vermont.gov/>  
<http://healthvermont.gov/blueprint.aspx>  
<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/CommissiononHealthCareReform/>  
<http://www.bishca.state.vt.us/health-care/health-care-administration>

13. Q: On page 10, Section 3.1.3, Actuarial Services in Support of Exchange Planning, the State has indicated that the services "... will be provided on an as-requested basis." Please confirm that the State is only requesting the bidder to provide hourly rates by level for these services as part of our response to this RFP.

A: Yes, that is correct. However, the successful bidder should provide sufficient information so as to ensure that the state can assess whether the bidder is qualified to do such work.

14. Q: On Page 11; Formal Stakeholder Study, you mention ongoing work soliciting stakeholder involvement performed by the State. Please describe work performed to date as well as any anticipated work.

A: DVHA and BISHCA are in the process of meeting informally with stakeholder groups, including the major carriers, low-income advocates, representatives of agents and brokers, small employers, the state human resources department, legislators, representatives of health care providers, and others. These first meetings are intended to elicit information about each stakeholder group's primary concerns and early suggestions on Exchange design. Bidders should propose an approach to obtain and assess more formal feedback.

15. Q: In Section 3.2 Cost Proposal, what is the maximum award planned for this Request for Proposal? Should a potential Bidder assume it equates to the \$1 million the State of Vermont received as a federal planning grant? If not, is there a not-to-exceed value for the contract resulting from this RFP?

A: Vermont's total grant award was \$1 million. At this time there is not a defined contract maximum. However it should not be assumed that the full amount is available for the awarded contract(s) as a portion of the total amount will be used for the State's operational use as directly relating to this contract(s).

16. Q: Will the State provide a Cost Proposal template to follow or should the vendor simply submit its own following the RFP guidelines?

A: The State will not provide a template for the cost proposal.

17. Q: With regard to the Cost Proposal, is there a guideline, format or template that the State requires for presentation of the cost estimates? Also, beyond showing costs for each respective section, as well as hourly rates for each type of staff class, will the State accept notation of "Cost Assumptions" as part of the Cost Proposal section?

A: There will not be a template. The State will accept notations of cost assumptions.

18. Q: Is there a weighting methodology that will be used to evaluate the four elements described for "Phases of the Evaluation"? That is, will Scope of Work be equal to Cost Proposal in evaluating proposals, or will one element be worth more than another?

A: The state is in the process of developing the weighting factors for scoring bids. Such work will be completed prior to bid opening.

19. Q: Will the proposals for each task be evaluated separately or will additional weight be given to someone who bids on entire project?

A: Additional weight will not be given to a contractor who bids on the entire project.

20. Q: Vermont was awarded \$1 Million on September 30, 2010 for the initial phase of planning and implementation of the HBE. Section 1.2 of the RFP indicates that certain portion of these grants will be used for costs internal to the State. What portion of the State Planning Grants does the State plan on using for this contract (covered in "Scope of Work", Section 3.1)? How does the State plan on funding additional contract costs?

A: This remains to be determined.

21. Q: Should the cost proposal be a subsection of the technical proposal or separately bound and sealed?

A: The cost proposal does not have to be separately bound and sealed.

22. Q: In reference to Section 6.6.1 General Terms of Ownership, we are working with an organization that has developed a microsimulation model for estimating the effects of health care reform at the state and national levels. We will propose to use that model in response to the RFP. This model is proprietary to the organization and is owned by the organization. We assume that the rights and ownership to this model and components of its development can be exempt from the terms in section 6.6.1. Is that correct?

A: Yes, models that are proprietary and developed with funds other than funds under this contract may remain as proprietary. All bid proposals and submitted information connected to this RFP may be subject to disclosure under the State's access to public records law. The successful bidder's response will become part of the official contract file. Once the contract is finalized, material associated with its negotiation is a matter of public record except for those materials that are

specifically exempted under the law. One such exemption is material that constitutes trade secret, proprietary, or confidential information.

If the response includes material that is considered by the bidder to be proprietary and confidential under 1 V.S.A., Ch. 5 Sec. 317, the bidder shall clearly designate the material as such prior to bid submission. The bidder must identify each page or section of the response that it believes is proprietary and confidential and provide a written explanation relating to each marked portion to justify the denial of a public record request should the State receive such a request. The letter must address the proprietary or confidential nature of each marked section, provide the legal authority relied on, and explain the harm that would occur should the material be disclosed. Under no circumstances can the entire response or price information be marked confidential. Responses so marked may not be considered and will be returned to the bidder.

All proposals shall become the property of the State. All public records of DVHA may be disclosed, except that submitted bid documents shall not be released until the Contractor and DVHA have executed the contract. At that time, the unsuccessful bidders may request a copy of their own score sheets as well as request to view the apparently successful bidder's proposal at the DVHA Office. The name of any Vendor submitting a response shall also be a matter of public record. Other persons or organizations may also make a request at that time or at a later date. Consistent with state law, DVHA will not disclose submitted bid documents or RFP records until execution of the contract(s). At that time, upon receipt of a public records request, information about the competitive procurement may be subject to disclosure. DVHA will review the submitted bids and related materials and consider whether those portions specifically marked by a bidder as falling within one of the exceptions of 1 V.S.A., Ch. 5 Sec. 317 are legally exempt. If in DVHA's judgment pages or sections marked as proprietary or confidential are not proprietary or confidential, DVHA will contact the bidder to provide the bidder with an opportunity to prevent the disclosure of those marked portions of its bid.

23. Q: If a Bidder or a Bidder's subcontractor is under common ownership and control with a commercial health insurance company that does business in the individual and group markets, will the successful Bidder's or its subcontractor's work under this RFP preclude the Bidder's or its subcontractor's health insurer affiliate from offering qualified health plans through the Vermont Health Benefit Exchange? If so, are there specific sections of the Scope of Work in the RFP that a Bidder or a subcontractor could perform that would not preclude its health insurer affiliate from offering qualified health plans through the Vermont Health Benefit Exchange?

A: In accordance with the RFP, all potential conflicts of interest should be disclosed. Where appropriate, given the bidders business structure, the bidder

must explain how it will perform the work required under the bid without obtaining an unfair business advantage or presenting a conflict of interest.

24. Q: We noted no page limit guidelines in the RFP. Will the State be limiting the number of pages that can be submitted?

A: There is no page limit, but bidders should use appropriate judgment in this regard.

25. Q: Is the State looking for a response to each question asked in the RFP or were those simply example questions for our reference?

A: The questions included in the RFP are examples of the types of questions we anticipate will be answered in the deliverables described in the RFP. They are not all-inclusive lists.

26. Q: How does the work anticipated under this RFP relate to Vermont's efforts to update information systems within the Agency of Human Services? What is the status of those efforts -- what has been done or is underway in terms of updates to overall architecture, eligibility systems, MMIS, and other systems that may be affected by the establishment of the Exchange?

A: Vermont is in the process of reviewing proposals for the essential components of a service oriented architectural design as a foundation for its new eligibility system. Attached is the RFP for this first phase of development. Vermont will be issuing an RFP in the near future for a new MMIS.

27. Q: To whom will the contractor report?

A: It is anticipated the contractor will work directly with Betsy Forrest, Health Care Affordability Project Director at Department of Vermont Health Access, and Rebecca Heintz, counsel to the Health Care Administration Division of the Department of Banking, Insurance, Securities, and Health Care Administration.

28. Q: Does the State require all services required in this RFP to be completed by September 30, 2011? Is it possible or likely that this contract may be extended beyond 9/30/2011?

A: According the terms of the federal exchange planning grant, all funds must be spent by September 30, 2011; therefore, all tasks under this contract must be completed by that date. There may be future federal grants, resulting in future contracts, for additional planning and implementation phases.

29. Q: Will the vendor(s) performing services under this RFP be allowed to bid and provide services under subsequent RFPs that may relate to the establishment of an Exchange?

A: Yes.

30. Q: Given the complexity of this proposal, please consider providing an extension to submit the responses to your RFP.

A: Current federally imposed timelines make an extension impossible at this time.

31. Q: May we have access to those firms that have requested the RFP? If so, when and how?

A: Bid openings are open to members of the public. However no further information which pertains to the bid will be available at that time other than the name and address of the bidder. Bid results are a matter of public record; however, the bid results are exempt from disclosure to the public until the award has been made and the contract is executed with the apparently successful bidder.

32. Q: May we have access to those firms that are selected? If so, when and how?

A: Bid results are a matter of public record, the bid results are exempt from disclosure to the public until the award has been made and the contract is executed with the apparently successful bidder.

33. Q: Are there other parties who we should communicate with regarding our capabilities?

A: No. Proposals will be reviewed by all parties responsible for awarding the contract(s).

34. Q: RFP page 5, Section 2.4.4, Corporate Qualifications – The section requests a one-paragraph biographical summary for key project personnel but also mentions resumes. Should bidders include the one paragraph summary in the body of the proposal and attach resumes in an appendix?

A: Yes.

35. Q: RFP page 6, Section 3.1, Scope of Work – Many of the subsections in 3.1 request the bidder to include timelines. Would the state prefer individual timelines for each subsection or one comprehensive timeline that addresses all tasks and subtasks?

A: One comprehensive timeline is preferred.

36. Q: RFP page 18, Section 7.1.2, Minimum Requirements – Item 4 states, “RFP General Terms and Conditions and other Contract terms must be accepted



(Sections 6, Appendices A, B, and C).” The appendices were not included in the RFP.

A: Attachments C and F, which were included in the RFP, contain the terms relevant to this RFP and resulting contract.

37. Q: What are the timeframes for completion of the various tasks as described in the RFP (e.g. 3.1.1 and all sub tasks, 3.1.1.2, 3.1.1.3, 3.1.1.4, 3.1.1.5, 3.1.1.6)? Do all tasks simply need to be completed by September 30, 2011 or will some tasks have due dates in advance of the contract end date? If some tasks have due dates in advance of the contract end date, please specify those interim due dates, to the extent possible.

A: Bidders should propose timelines applicable to the scope of work. As noted above, funding for this work ends on September 30, 2011.

38. Q: Section 3.1.1.3 includes a requirement that the successful bidder work closely with "the State, including stakeholders..." What is the listing of stakeholders that the state anticipates requiring the Vendor to work with? How many meetings does the State anticipate will be necessary for stakeholder input? Are there meetings that are regularly scheduled that could be leveraged to obtain the necessary stakeholder input or will the State require the successful bidder to arrange for and run dedicated meetings?

A: Although there may be some regularly scheduled meetings that can be leveraged to obtain input, most meetings will need to be scheduled specifically for this purpose. The RFP contains a description of the groups from which we need to obtain input. The state expects the contractor to propose the appropriate number of meetings and the character of such meetings.

39. Q: With respect to section 3.1.4 please supply information regarding the number and type of focus groups, meetings, and one-on-one interviews that you anticipate as part of the stakeholder process.

A: Please see answer in #37 above.

40. Q: The RFP and DVHA's federal grant proposal both mention that DVHA is already soliciting stakeholder input. Can you provide more information about what you have in mind for the Formal Stakeholder Study (Section 3.1.4), the relationship and differences between your existing efforts and the study, and where one leaves off and the other begins?

A: The State is currently conducting informal meetings with stakeholders. The “formal” stakeholder study should take a more structured approach to obtaining input, resulting in a report of findings that will inform the design and implementation process.



41. Q: Section 3.1.1.4 includes the following language: "Additionally, the financing options analysis would be expected to include consideration of the additional cost of state-mandated insurance benefits, if any, and the impact such costs would have on financing options." Is the State looking for actuarial level analysis to be included as part of this section?

A: Ideally, yes.

42. Q: Section 3.1.1.5 asks for recommendations, including cost estimates, for performing specific financial functions within the Exchange. Does the state anticipate the need for CPA level analysis as part of the final report for this section or is the State looking solely for business process and redesign at a high level?

A: Ideally, a CPA level analysis would be provided.

43. Q: Section 3.1.1.5 asks for a written assessment of each financial function the Exchange "must, or could, perform" Does the State intend to provide a listing of the functions for which it would like analysis performed?

A: The State expects the contractor to have sufficient expertise to identify the necessary financial functions that the Exchange must perform, as well the functions that, although not required by law, would enhance the effectiveness of the Exchange by either making it more consumer friendly or reducing administrative costs. It is anticipated that the contractor and the state will work together to identify functions that are practically or politically feasible and which are in need of analysis.

44. Q: Are the references to "Anticipated price" and "total bid price for all work" expected to represent the vendor's best estimate and not a fixed price for all services described?

A: For specific deliverable scope of work, contractors should identify a maximum bid price. For ad hoc work, contractors should identify hourly rates and other costs, as well as identify an anticipated total cost. All contracts will be awarded with a maximum amount identified.

45. Q: Do you anticipate the need for periodic briefings for legislators and/or other interested parties?

A: That is likely.